

Announcement from the Royal Society of New Zealand

Tuesday 14 April, 2009

RUTHERFORD FOUNDATION AWARDS FREEMASONS ROSKILL FOUNDATION
POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP

The Rutherford Foundation of the Royal Society of New Zealand has awarded Dr Nicola Jackson the inaugural Freemasons Roskill Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship to undertake postdoctoral research at the University of Cambridge.

Nicola will join a team of scientists within the Department of Pathology led by Professor John Trowsdale and Dr Adrian Kelly, whose research is focused on understanding how pathogens interact with their host's immune system.

Neville Jordan, President of the Royal Society of New Zealand and Chair of the Board of the Trustees of the Rutherford Foundation, said "We would like to thank the Freemasons Roskill Foundation for their generous support of this Fellowship. We are delighted to have the opportunity to expand the suite of scholarships and fellowships offered by the Royal Society of New Zealand Rutherford Foundation."

Nicola recently completed her PhD in Molecular Medicine and Pathology at the University of Auckland. Under the supervision of Professor John Fraser, she investigated the antibiotic-resistant superbug, *Staphylococcus aureus*. She also collaborated with Professor Ted Baker in the Maurice Wilkins Centre for Molecular Biodiscovery.

The opportunity to work with the Trowsdale/Kelly group in Cambridge will allow Nicola to broaden her interest in host-pathogen interaction and to apply the knowledge gained from her PhD to another important human pathogen, *Salmonella enterica*.

Salmonella is the most common cause of food-borne illness and is a major public health problem. There is currently no vaccine available and a number of multi-drug resistant strains have been found. *Salmonella* is a cunning pathogen because it invades host immune cells, inhibiting their ability to deal with the current infection and prevent future ones.

Nicola intends to investigate how this process works. This will provide important information about *Salmonella*, and may ultimately lead to ways of achieving long-term immunity to re-infection.

The sponsor of the new Fellowship is charitable trust, Freemasons Roskill Foundation. Chairman, David Mace, was enthusiastic in his congratulations for Nicola as an outstanding inaugural winner and said further Fellowships will follow at Universities such as Edinburgh and Dublin's Trinity as well as Cambridge.

“Education at all levels is intrinsic to Freemasonry but this fellowship is the pinnacle of our support for young New Zealanders to make their mark in the world. We hope the Freemasons Fellowship becomes the benchmark for educational honours in this country. We are very grateful to the Royal Society of New Zealand for their wholehearted endorsement of our aims and are delighted that the Fellowship is a major part of the new Royal Society Rutherford Foundation’s portfolio of awards.”

The award will be presented at a function at The University of Auckland on Thursday evening.

For more information, contact Dr Di McCarthy, Chief Executive of the Royal Society of New Zealand, Tel (04) 470 5757, email di.mccarthy@roysociety.org.nz